

IN THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claim 1 (previously presented) A method of manufacturing a wheel rim from a plate-like blank, comprising the steps of:

curving said blank;

forming a hollow cylindrical body by bringing end faces of the blank into abutment against each other;

forming a recess depressed from a curved outer circumferential wall of said hollow cylindrical body toward an inner circumferential wall thereof;

forming curled portions on opposite ends of said hollow cylindrical body by bending a circular end face of said hollow cylindrical body with said recess formed therein toward another circular end face thereof; and

forming hump portions by pressing regions near said curled portions of said hollow cylindrical body with said curled portions on the opposite ends thereof, from said inner circumferential wall to raise said outer circumferential wall.

Claim 2 (previously presented) A method according to claim 1, wherein said step of forming said curled portions comprises the first curling step of forming said end faces into respective

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curved shapes, and the second curling step of forming the curved shapes into rectangular shapes.

Claim 3 (original) A method according to claim 2, wherein said first curling step is performed by a pressing process and said second curling step is performed by a spinning process.

Claim 4 (previously presented) A method according to claim 3, wherein in said first curling step, a side wall surface of said recess is supported and said end face of said hollow cylindrical body near said side wall surface is curled, and thereafter another side wall surface of said recess is supported and said end face of said hollow cylindrical body near said other side wall surface is curled.

Claim 5 (previously presented) A method according to claim 1, wherein said step of forming a hollow cylindrical body is performed by friction stir welding.

Claim 6 (previously presented) A method according to claim 1, wherein through holes are formed in said curled portions and said recess after said step of forming said hump portions.

Claim 7 (previously presented) A method of manufacturing a wheel rim by bringing end faces of a workpiece into abutment against each other to form a hollow cylindrical body and forming a circumferential recess which is depressed from an outer circumferential wall of said hollow

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cylindrical body toward an inner circumferential wall thereof, said method comprising the steps of providing protrusions disposed near ends of a joined area of said hollow cylindrical body and extending in a joining direction, and then pressing said outer circumferential wall of said hollow cylindrical body to form said recess.

Claim 8 (previously presented) A method according to claim 7, wherein fingers are formed on respective corners of said workpiece and joined to form said protrusions.

Claim 9 (previously presented) A method according to claim 7, wherein said hollow cylindrical body is cut circumferentially to form said protrusions.

Claim 10 (previously presented) A method according to claim 7, wherein abutting edges of said hollow cylindrical body are joined to each other by friction stir welding.

Claim 11 (previously presented) A method according to claim 7, wherein said recess is formed by a spinning process or a roll forming process.

Claim 12 (previously presented) A wheel for supporting a vehicular tire fitted thereover, comprising:

a wheel rim formed as a hollow cylinder from a plate-like blank; and

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a wheel disk formed from a plate-like blank, said wheel disk having a peripheral edge portion bent substantially parallel to the central axis of rotation of said wheel and a slanted surface beveled from an end face of said peripheral edge portion toward said central axis of rotation;

wherein a welded bead is formed from an inner side surface of said wheel rim to said slanted surface of said wheel disk, said wheel rim and said wheel disk being joined to each other.

Claim 13 (previously presented) A wheel according to claim 12, wherein said slanted surface of said wheel disk is tilted at an acute angle of 45° or greater with respect to said central axis of rotation of said wheel.

Claim 14 (previously presented) A method of manufacturing a wheel for supporting a vehicular tire fitted thereover, said wheel comprising:

a wheel rim formed as a hollow cylinder from a plate-like blank; and

a wheel disk formed from a plate-like blank, said wheel disk having a peripheral edge portion bent substantially parallel to the central axis of rotation of said wheel and a slanted surface beveled from an end face of said peripheral edge portion toward said central axis of rotation;

said method comprising the steps of placing a pressure-fitted product in which said peripheral edge portion of said wheel disk is press-fitted into an inner side surface of said wheel rim, holding said pressure-fitted product such that said slanted surface of said wheel disk is substantially horizontal, and thereafter welding said wheel rim to said slanted surface to form a welded bead

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thereby to join said wheel rim and said wheel disk to each other.

Claim 15 (previously presented) A method according to claim 14, wherein said pressure-fitted product is held such that said slanted surface of said wheel disk is more tilted toward said wheel rim.

Claim 16 (new) A method of inspecting whether or not a joint formed by friction stir welding contains a joint defect, using an ultrasonic flaw inspecting apparatus, comprising the steps of:

immersing said joint in a liquid medium; and

longitudinally scanning said joint with an ultrasonic probe, while said ultrasonic probe radiates an ultrasonic wave on said joint, and inspects an ultrasonic wave reflected from said joint,

wherein said joint is judged as containing the joint defect, when intensity of a measured B echo belonging to said ultrasonic wave reflected from a rear surface of said joint is smaller than the intensity of a theoretical B echo that appears in the absence of a joint defect.